

Save The Forester

Community Update 18th June 2026

Did You Know

Since 1884 the pub was used as a 'Court' by the Ancient Order of Foresters and in March 1972 The New Inn at Donhead St Andrew was renamed the Forester in recognition of this association.

Before the Welfare State, working families formed mutual aid and support groups of their own. One such was the Ancient Order of Foresters, dating from 1790, founded on a shared duty to assist their fellow men who fell into need as they walked through the forest of life. "Like many of the great British inventions they seem to have been developed over a pint in the local pub," as one historian puts it.

Every week each member of the society would meet at a 'Court', usually in a local pub, and pay in a small sum of money, a sixpence or a shilling.

Whenever times got hard, due to ill health, unemployment or even, it was said, 'an unplanned baby', members could request assistance from the pot.

Dairy farmers formed 'Cow clubs', while other societies include the Ancient Order of Shepherds, the Amalgamated Order of Comical Fellows, and the Halifax United Order of the Peaceful Dove Friendly Society. Foresters' societies sprang up in densely wooded areas, and by 1945 there were 3,111 different branches, with an astonishing half a million members in the UK, US, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the West Indies. Today the society is still a mutual fund, with a £268 million under management for its members.

There are villagers in Donhead today who remember the old-style Ancient Order of Foresters, the regalia, and the jolly meetings.

Where We Stand on the Pub Acquisition

Our formal offer for The Forester – grounded in the Red Book Valuation and the independent Condition Survey – was submitted to the owners on **13th May**. The offer was rejected and they have indicated that they are considering lodging an appeal on their Change of Use application. They later asked to see our valuation documents. We shared these on **18th May**, and we are waiting on a response.

Meanwhile, on **10th June**, Christies posted a revised advert reducing the asking price from **£550,000 to £525,000**. It's a step in the right direction, though well above our offer. Throughout this process we've kept **Wiltshire Planning** and the **Plunkett Foundation** fully updated. Plunkett have kindly offered to write in support of our offer to Wiltshire Planners – a welcome boost at a crucial moment.

While we wait for movement from the owners, we've been putting this time to excellent use.

Fundraising Momentum

Pledges now stand at an impressive **£581,500 from 164 supporters** – a remarkable show of community belief.

Alongside the community share offer, we're preparing to launch a coordinated **social media and crowdfunding campaign** once a sales agreement is in place. This will help us widen our reach and bring in supporters from around the world.

We've also been busy applying for grants. After researching hundreds of potential providers, we've submitted applications to:

- The Co-Op Booster Fund
- The National Lottery
- Loneliness in Rural Areas
- The Landfill Community Fund

We'll continue applying, though we're realistic that grants may only contribute modest amounts.

Business Planning & Finance

To ensure our Donheads' Community Benefit Society Business Plan and Share Offer are rock-solid, we've brought in a specialist in community business accounting. They are rebuilding and refining our **Profit & Loss, Balance Sheet, and Cash Flow models** so investors can have confidence in the numbers.

We're also fortunate to have the **support of experienced hospitality professionals** who have reviewed our outline forecast for the pub under tenancy, challenged assumptions, and offered invaluable advice. Their input strengthens our belief that future tenants will have every chance to run a thriving, sustainable business. On the **legal side**, we've engaged local solicitors so we're ready to move quickly once a sale is agreed. We're also considering applying for the **Community Shares Standard Mark** to give investors and grant bodies even greater assurance.

Tenants & Future Operations

We're starting to contact search agencies to understand how we might go about finding a tenant and learning from other successful community pubs. Expressions of interest in running the pub have been received, we have acknowledged these and will be following them up once we have a sales agreement in place – but if you know someone who could be a good fit, please encourage them to send in a CV.

Refurbishment & Renovation

The **Historic Building Advisory Service** (Tisbury) has completed a detailed survey and produced a full schedule of refurbishment and renovation works, prioritised by urgency and cost. Local tradespeople have been invited to review the plans and offer practical advice. This groundwork means we'll be ready to move more quickly once the pub is secured.

How You Can Help Right Now

1. Funding

- If you haven't yet made a pledge, please do – **every pledge genuinely counts**.
- Spread the word to friends, colleagues, and businesses who may want to be part of this once-in-a-generation community project.

2. Publicity & Social Media

Help us grow our visibility and demonstrate strong community backing:

- Follow us on Facebook and Instagram
- Share and visit www.supporttheforester.org

Potential investors and grant bodies look at these channels – your engagement strengthens our case.

3. Pub History & Stories

Do you have memories, anecdotes, or stories about The Forester?

We'd love to share them as part of our social media storytelling. These personal histories help bring the pub's legacy to life.